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Be Aware of Africanized Honey Bees

San Bernardino. Africanized honey bees (AHB) are potential public health and safety problems. The San Bernardino County Mosquito and Vector Program recommend you educate yourself and your family about AHB safety.

Africanized Honey Bees, also called “killer bees”, arrived in California and became established in 1994. Although its “killer bee” reputation is highly exaggerated, their presence has resulted in an increase in stings to individuals and animals since their arrival.

Africanized Honey Bees and European Honey Bees (EHB) look and behave similarly. They protect their hives, sting in defense, can only sting once, and produce wax and honey. Both types of bees play an important role in pollinating flowers.

Here are facts to remember about AHB. AHB are less predictable and more defensible than EHB. They can sense a threat from animals or people more than 50-feet from the hive. They are sensitive to vibrations from power equipment at more than 100-feet from the hive. AHB are more likely to become agitated and will defend a greater area around their nest. They respond much faster and in greater numbers to threats. AHB will pursue an intruder up to ¼ mile.

General precautions should always be taken. Be alert when participating in outdoor sports and activities. Look and listen for indications of bee activity. Use care when entering sheds or outbuildings where bees may nest. Examine work areas before using lawn mowers, weed whackers or other power equipment. Examine areas before tying up or penning pets or livestock. Do not disturb a hive or swarm. Contact a pest control company or your local Vector Control office if you observe a hive or swarm. Teach children to be cautious and respectful of bees.

Bee proof your home. Maintain screens in good condition on your windows. Inspect outside walls and eaves of the home and seal openings larger than 1/8”in size. Seal areas around chimneys and where plumbing enters walls. Install fine screens with 1/8” hardware cloth over top of rain spouts, vents, and openings in water meter/utility boxes.

If you are stung, quickly move to a safe area. Pull or scrape the stinger from skin as soon as possible (the first minute is crucial). Wash the sting area with soap and water. Apply an ice pack for a few minutes to relieve the swelling and seek medical attention if you have labored breathing or if you are stung numerous times.

For more information contact San Bernardino County Mosquito and Vector Control at 909-388-4600 or visit the website at www.sbcounty.gov/dehs.

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